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## CORRESPONDENCE

### HERRICK AND *Naps upon Parnassus*

All students of Herrick are impressed by the fact that his *Hesperides*, 1648, did not obtain the success that met Waller's *Poems*, 1645, or Cowley's *Mistress*, 1647. Contrary to the usual custom, Herrick's volume appeared with no commendatory verses. The earliest allusion to the *Hesperides*, a Latin couplet prefixed to *Lucasta*, 1649, actually ranks Lovelace with the author of *Corinna Going A-Maying*. Three lines in the *Musarum Deliciæ*, 1656, speak of "young Herric" entertaining the Muses in a sprightly vein with old sack,—hardly an adequate appreciation. It is not until ten years after the *Hesperides* was published that we find as much as six lines devoted to him. To quote from the most recent study of the poet by Floris Delattre,<sup>1</sup> "Dans un simple pamphlet enfin paru en 1658, nous trouvons le plus bel éloge qui ait jamais été fait de Herrick, et qui dut le transporter de joie. On vient de parler des anciens, d'Ovide, de Martial, de Virgile 'qui a tout volé à Homère,' et l'on arrive à Horace :

And then *Flaccus Horace*  
He was but a sower ass,  
And good for nothing but *Lyricks* :  
There's but One to be found  
In all English ground  
Writes as well; who is hight *Robert Herrick*."

In considering this stanza a genuine compliment to the poet, I believe that Delattre and others who have cited it have quite misunderstood its meaning.

It appeared in 1658 in a slender volume printed "by express Order from the Wits, for N. Brook at the Angel in Cornhill," and entitled "*Naps upon Parnassus. A Sleepy Muse nipt and pincht, though not awakened. Such Voluntary and Jovial Copies of Verses, as were lately receiv'd from some of the Wits of the Universities, in a Frolick, dedicated to Gondibert's Mistress by Captain Jones and others. Whereunto is added for the Demonstration of the author's prosaic Excellencys, his Epistle to one of Universities, with the Answer; together with two Satyrical Characters of his Own, of*

<sup>1</sup> *Robert Herrick*, Paris, 1912, p. 110.

*a Temporizer and an Antiquary, with Marginal Notes by a Friend to the Reader."*

As this title sufficiently indicates, the book is pure burlesque. It was written by Thomas Flatman, the poet, Sprat (who became Bishop of Rochester), Woodford, Taylour, Castle, and "other Wits of the University of Oxford" to ridicule Samuel Austin, a Commoner of Wadham College, "vain, conceited, overvaluing his poetic fancy," so Wood informs us. Evidently the victim of this elaborate joke must have been, in the words of the latest historian of Wadham College, "an insufferable coxcomb, a kind of seventeenth century Robert Montgomery." At least it may be said in his favor that he came honestly by his bad verses, for in 1629 his father, Bishop Samuel Austin, published *Urania or the Heavenly Muse, Being a true story of man's fall and redemption, set forth in a poem containing two Bookes: whereof one resembles the Law, the other the Gospel*. This poem of one hundred and thirty-six tedious pages resembles Quarles's work at its lowest depth, the author's unaffected piety being its one saving grace. Plainly the Austin family were not destined for the laurel.

Wishing, then, to overwhelm a conceited poetaster, the Oxford wits obtained some of Austin's verses, added others equally bad, concocted satirical notes and comments and produced *Naps on Parnassus*. This is said to have driven Austin from Oxford to Cambridge. Unfortunately it did not quench his ambition to write, for in 1661 he published *A Panegyrick on his Sacred Majesties Royal Person, Charles the II<sup>d</sup>*.—undoubtedly one of the worst compositions ever inflicted upon English readers:

Your souldiers ride before,  
Not stained with wounds or gore,  
They are arrai'd for sight, and not to fight,  
Their arms made for delight not to affright,  
Bloud displaies only in the paint,  
Great Mars this day looks thin and faint.

If Austin could perpetrate this when a man, what must his verses have been in his college days at Wadham. One is inclined to believe that *Naps on Parnassus* was justified.

This little book, then, was crushingly satirical in its commendatory letters, its comments, its poems. Whenever it praises, it does so in pure irony; for example, its opening verses announce that Austin's poems are far superior to Homer's:

Room, room now for a lusty Poet,  
 That writes as high as any I know yet,  
 What's *Homer* but a *spewing Dog*  
 Who writes a *fight* 'twixt *Mouse and Frog*?  
 Of stout *Achilles* and of *Hector*,  
 Which of them shall be the Victor?

Immediately following this occurs the reference to Herrick. It is always quoted without its context; here are the verses in full:

Then come along Boyes,  
 Valiant and strong Boyes,  
 For here's a *Poet* I tell ye  
 That *Naps on Parnassus*  
 And (O Heaven bless us)  
 Takes *Deep-sleeps* too out of *Heli-*

*Con.* Avaunt then poor *Virgil*,  
 Thou ne'ere dranks't a pure Gill  
 Of Sack, to refine thy sconce:  
 Thou stol'st all from *Homer*,  
 And rod'st on a low *mare*,  
 Instead of *Pegasus* for th'nonce.

Let *Martial* be hang'd,  
 For Ile swear I'le be bang'd,  
 If he makes me ought else but sleepy;  
 He's only at last  
 For a brideling cast,  
 And his *Wit* lies at th' end of his *Epi-*

*grams*. Then for *Ovid*,  
 Why? was not his Love hid  
 In's *Book* of *Toyes*, call'd *Amorum*:  
 Indeed there he wrote *madly*,  
 But in's *Tristium* *sadly*;  
 Our *Poet's* th' *Apollo virorum*.

And then *Flaccus Horace*,  
 He was but a sowr-ass,  
 And good for nothing but *Lyrics*:  
 There's but One to be found  
 In all English ground  
 Writes as well; who is hight *Robert Herrick*.

Our *Author's* much better,  
 In every letter  
 Then *Robin*, and *Horace Flaccus*,  
 He is called *Samuel*,  
 Who ends well, and began well;  
 And if we'r not glad He can make us.

Plainly there was no disposition on the part of the author or authors of these lines to bestow "un bel éloge" on anyone. If they praise Austin—or Herrick—it is merely in sport. It is evident that the wits of Oxford knew the Cambridge poet of "brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers"; it is not evident that they had a high regard for his verse.

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#### THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

I wish to draw attention to the fact that some of the more or less responsible makers of Classical Dictionaries are evidently in error in their reports of the offer of Pallas to Paris in the famous judgment between the goddesses. Harper's *Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities* says, "The goddesses appeared before him (*i. e.* Paris), and each to influence his decision, made him an alluring offer of future advantage, Here by the promise of a Kingdom, Athene by the gift of intellectual superiority<sup>1</sup> and martial renown, and Aphrodite by offering him the fairest woman in the world for his wife." Now, as a matter of fact, reference to Classical literature shows that Athene nowhere makes an offer of wisdom or of intellectual renown. Roscher, in his *Lexicon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, basing his statement upon a complete survey of Classical literature, says, "Die Geschichte vom Urtheil des Paris bleibt durch die ganze griechisch-römische Litterature in den wesentlichen Zügen gleich, and hat so jedenfalls schon in den 'Kyprien' gestanden." And the offer of Athena in the Cypria is "Victory in every battle."

While the statement of Roscher may be taken as conclusive so far as Greek and Roman literature is concerned, still it is interesting to note that in Middle English literature the prevailing offer of Athena is wisdom and intellectual superiority. In the *Destruction of Troy* (EETS. 39, 56, ed. Panton and Donaldson), *ca.* 1375, probably the first translation of the Troy story into English, Mercury delivers the promise of Pallas in the following words (ll. 2410 ff.) :

<sup>1</sup> This statement is supported by Sieffert, *Dict. of Classical Antiquities*; Ellis, *1000 Mythological Characters*; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, etc.